

EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS. ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,

And Many Explanatory Notes.

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LUKE XII. 54–59.

<p>54 And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.</p> <p>55 And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.</p> <p>56 Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?</p>	<p>57 Yea, and why even of your selves judge ye not what is right</p> <p>58 When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, <i>as thou art</i> in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.</p> <p>59 I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.</p>
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THE first thing which this passage teaches us is *the duty of noticing the signs of the times*. The Jews in our Lord's days neglected this duty. They shut their eyes against events occurring in their own day of the most significant character. They refused to see that prophecies were being fulfilled around them which were bound up with the coming of Messiah, and that Messiah Himself must be in the midst of them. The sceptre had departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet. The seventy weeks of Daniel were fulfilled. (Gen. xlix. 10; Dan. ix. 24.) The ministry of John the Baptist had excited attention from one end of the land to the other. The miracles of Christ were great, undeniable, and notorious. But still the eyes of the Jews were blinded. They still obstinately refused to believe that Jesus was the Christ. And hence they drew from our Lord the question,—“How is it that ye do not discern this time?”

It becomes the servants of God, in every age, to observe the public events of their own day, and to compare them with the predictions of unfulfilled prophecy. There is nothing commendable in an ignorant indifference to contemporary history. The true Christian should rather watch the career of governments and nations with a jealous watchfulness, and hail with gladness the slightest indication of the day of the Lord being at hand. The Christian who cannot see the hand of God in history, and does not believe in the gradual movement of all kingdoms towards the final subjection of all things to Christ, is as blind as the Jew.

Have we no signs of the times to observe? The question is soon answered. The history of the last seventy years is full of events which demand the prayerful attention of every servant of Christ. The things that have happened within these seventy years ought to send us to our watch towers, and raise in us great searchings of heart. The rise and progress of a missionary spirit among all Protestant Churches,—the wide-spread interest felt about the Jews,—the evident decay of the Mahometan power,—the shaking of all the kingdoms of Europe by the French revolution,—the extraordinary spread of knowledge and education,—the marvellous revival of Romanism,—the steady growth of the most subtle forms of infidelity,—all these

are facts which cannot be denied, and facts which ought to speak loudly to every well-informed Christian. Surely they deserve to be called signs of our times.

Let us remember the words of our Lord in the passage before us, and not err after the manner of the Jews. Let us not be blind, and deaf, and insensible to all that God is doing, both in the Church and in the world. The things of which we have just been reminded are surely not without meaning. They have not come on the earth by chance or by accident, but by the appointment of God. We ought not to doubt that they are a call to watchfulness, and to preparation for the day of God. May we all have an ear to hear, and a heart to understand! May we not sleep as do many, but watch and discern our time. It is a solemn saying in the book of Revelation: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." (Rev. iii. 3.)

The second thing which this passage teaches us, is *the immense importance of seeking reconciliation with God before it be too late*. This is a lesson which our Lord illustrates by a parable or comparison. He compares us to a man on his way to a magistrate with an adversary, in consequence of a difference or dispute, and describes the course which such a man ought to take.—Like him, we are upon our way to the presence of a Judge. We shall all stand at the bar of God.—Like him, we have an adversary. The holy law of God is against us, and contrary to us, and its demands must be satisfied.—Like him, we ought to give diligence to get our case settled, before it comes before the Judge. We ought to seek pardon and forgiveness before we die.—Like him, if we let our opportunity slip, the judgment will go against us, and we shall be cast into the prison of hell. Such appears to be the meaning of the parable in the passage before us. It is a vivid picture of the care which men ought to take in the great matter of reconciliation with God.

Peace with God is by far the first thing in religion. We are born in sin, and children of wrath. We have no natural love towards God. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is impossible that God can take pleasure in us. "The wicked his soul hateth." (Psalm xi. 5.) The chief and foremost desire of every one who professes to have any religion, should be to obtain reconciliation. Till this is done, nothing is done. We have got nothing worth having in Christianity, until we have peace with God. The law brings us in guilty. The judgment is sure to go against us. Without reconciliation, the end of our life's journey will be hell.

Peace with God is the principal thing which the Gospel of Christ offers to the soul. Peace and pardon stand in the forefront of its list of privileges, and are tendered freely to everyone that believe on Jesus. There is One who can deliver us from the adversary. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the

law, being made a curse for us. Christ has blotted out the handwriting that was against us, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. The claims of our adversary are all satisfied by Christ's blood. God can now be just, and yet the justifier of every one that believeth on Jesus. A full atonement has been made. The debt has been completely paid. The Judge can say, "Deliver them: I have found a ransom." (Job xxxiii. 24.)

Let us never rest till we know and feel that we are reconciled to God. Let it not content us to go to Church, use means of grace, and be reckoned Christians, without knowing whether our sins are pardoned, and our souls justified. Let us seek to know that we are one with Christ, and Christ in us,—that our iniquities are forgiven, and our sins covered. Then, and then only, may we lie down in peace, and look forward to judgment without fear. The time is short. We are travelling on to a day when our lot for eternity must be decided. Let us give diligence that we may be found safe in that day. The souls that are found without Christ shall be cast into a hopeless prison.

NOTES. LUKE XII. 54-59.

54.—[*He said to the people.*] Let it be noted, that the concluding portion of the Lord's discourse in this chapter is specially addressed to "the people," and not to the disciples, as the preceding verses were. It consists of a general rebuke of the blindness of the Jewish nation in not seeing the signs of the times, and the fulfilment of prophecy, and a general exhortation to seek reconciliation with God, before it be too late.

[*A cloud rise out of the west ... a shower.*] It should be remembered that the Mediterranean sea lies on the West of the whole Jewish territory. It was from this quarter that rain generally came. The "little cloud" rising out of the sea, which Elijah's servant saw from Mount Carmel, and which brought rain, is an illustration of our Lord's words. (1 Kings xviii. 44.)

55.—[*The south wind blew ... heat.*] It should be remembered, that the great wilderness of Sinai and the hot deserts of Arabia, lie to the South of the Jewish territory. This accounts for winds from this quarter bringing heat. (Jerem. iv. 11, 12.)

56.—[*Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky.*] Our Lord's argument appears to be that the signs of His advent as the true Messiah, were so clear and intelligible, that it required no more discernment to see them than it did to foretell heat or rain from observation of the heavens and the winds. If the Jews would honestly and impartially consider the signs of their times, they could not avoid the conclusion that Christ was the Messiah. The truth was that they were not honest in their inquiries, but prejudiced and unbelieving. He therefore calls them "hypocrites."

57.—[*Why even of yourselves judge ye not...right.*] We must be careful not to interpret this verse so as to make it contradict other Scriptures. Our Lord does not mean to say that the Jews could understand spiritual things, and see the kingdom of God by their own unassisted judgment, and without the teaching of the Holy Ghost. His meaning is, "Why do ye not of yourselves, by simply observing what is going on around you, form a right judgment about my claim to be received as the Messiah, and a just decision upon the matters in dispute between me and your teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees."

The Greek word translated “right,” is more commonly rendered “just” or “righteous.”

58.—[*When thou goest with thine adversary, &c.*] It is worthy of remark that the contents of this verse and the following, are found in the Sermon on the Mount, in an entirely different connection. It is evident that our Lord made use of the same illustration on two different occasions, and with two entirely different applications. In the Sermon on the Mount the words are used to enforce the great duty of forgiveness of injuries. In the passage before us our Lord’s object appears to be to enforce the solemn duty of seeking timely reconciliation with God. Life is the way. The law of God is the adversary. The magistrate represents the last judgment. The prison represents hell. This certainly appears to me the only satisfactory exposition of the passage. The other view, that it is only a repetition of the lesson in Matt. v. 25, is liable to this grave objection, that it makes our Lord conclude a solemn discourse by a most abrupt introduction of a subject which has no connection with the context. On the other hand, to enforce on the multitude around Him the great duty of seeking reconciliation with God before it was too late, appears a natural termination of the whole address.

Stier remarks, “The mere reference to placability towards a brother with whom I may have matter of litigation, would not be a distinctive conclusion of this discourse (although it was occasioned by the contention of brothers about an inheritance), and would be an inexplicable subsidence of the strain into a matter quite foreign to verses 55-57.”

59.—[*Not depart thence, till thou hast paid.*] The meaning of this expression is, “Thou shalt never depart at all.” Poole remarks, “It is a sign the Papists are at a woeful loss for arguments to prove purgatory, when they make use of this text, as if it spake of a prison for souls, from which there is an outlet.” Such an argument would prove many absurdities if applied to other texts where the expression “until” is used. See Psalm lxxii. 7, and cx. 1; and Matt. i. 25.

Theophylact remarks, “If we shall remain in prison until we pay the uttermost farthing, and are never able to pay it, it is manifest that future punishment is eternal.”

Euthymius says, “This means, thou shalt never come out from prison at all.”

Stella, the Spanish commentator, says, “The wicked shall be placed in hell until they pay their debt to the uttermost farthing; and as they never will pay it, it is certain that they will be there to all eternity.”